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Attitude toward Higher Education and Academic Engagement

Damianus Abun (a) *Gerson Jeremy C. Antonio* (b) *Christine D. Alipio* (c) *Leonilo A. Reginaldo*(d) *Libertine Gertrude R. Macaspac* (f)

(a) Ph.D.: Divine Word College of Vigan, and St. Benedict College of Northern Luzon, Philippines.
(b) Ph.D.: Master Teacher 1, Ilocos Norte College of Arts and Trade and School of Education, Divine Word College of Laoag.
(c) Ph.D.: Professor, School of Education, Divine Word College of Laoag.
(d) MAED: Faculty, School of Arts, Sciences, and Education, Divine Word College of Laoag.
(f) PhD: Associate for Research Accreditation and Quality Assurance, Divine Word College of Laoag.

A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The study aimed to examine college students' attitudes toward higher education and its effects on their academic engagement. To deepen the concept of the study, related literature was reviewed to broaden the understanding of human attitude and behavior, and academic engagement. The study used a descriptive assessment and correlational research design. The population of the study was students of the two colleges of Divine Word College of Laoag, Ilocos Norte, and Vigan, Ilocos Sur. To gather the data, validated questionnaires were used. To interpret the data, the Mean and Pearson r were used. Mean was used to measure the cognitive and affective attitude of students toward education and their academic engagement. Pearson r was used to determine the relationship between the cognitive and affective attitudes of students toward higher education and academic engagement. The study found that students' cognitive and affective attitude toward higher education correlates significantly with academic engagement.

Introduction

The Philippine education system recently changed from 10 to 12 years, with the addition of Senior High School (Maca, 2012, EdWatch, 2007; Uyquiengco, n.d; GOVPH, 2012. The purpose is to prepare students for early employment and overseas universities (ICEF Monitor, 2013). Senior High School is not new globally, but it has not been a requirement for employment in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia (UNESCO, 2021). The specializations offered in Senior High School prepare students for tertiary education (Mearian, 2022; Cueva, 2022; Malaguial, et al., 2023). Filipino students have different motivations (Reyes and Galang, 2009) for pursuing higher education, including familial obligation, self-esteem, and professional competence as explained by Cruz and Ramirez (2016). This study investigated the perception of Divine Word Colleges' students towards higher education and its effects on their academic engagement as pointed out by Ajzen & Fishbein (1977) and Gbollie and Keamu (2017). The study is divided

into five parts: introduction, literature review, research methodology, presentation of data and analysis, and results and discussion.

Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to provide an understanding of the theories relevant to the study and to develop a conceptual framework and statement of the problem that serves as the foundation for the research investigation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework
Theories of Human Attitude and Attitude Formation

Human attitude refers to an individual's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behavior toward a particular subject, person, object, institution, or event (Cherry, 2019). It involves evaluating things based on one's perception, ideas, or feelings (Albarracín, Johnson, & Zanna, 2005; Wood, 2000) and can be directed towards an object, person, institution, or social group (Albarracín, Johnson, & Zanna, 2005). Because attitudes are subjective evaluations of these objects, they vary from person to person due to differences in their experiences with them (De Houwer, Thomas, & Baeyens, 2001). As a result, individuals may hold either positive or negative opinions or feelings toward a particular subject, object, person, group, institution, event, and so on. In other words, attitude is the predisposition of an individual to react favorably or unfavorably towards a specific object, person, institution, or event (Ajzen, 1993).

The question then arises: where do individuals learn or acquire these attitudes? According to Ajzen (1993), attitudes are formed through exposure or experience, such as watching television or other forms of media. However, Abun (2018) delves deeper into the formation of attitudes, arguing that culture plays a significant role. Abun's opinion is based on the work of Donald (2002) and Hofstede, as cited by Brown (1995), whom both suggest that culture can influence brain function and structure. Hofstede (in Brown, 1995) also proposes that culture is the collective programming of the human mind, which can distinguish one group from another. Armstrong (1996) also supports this view, arguing that an individual's ethical perception is greatly influenced by their culture. Consequently, one's ethical judgment is often dependent on the culture in which they were raised.

Ajzen (1993) contends that there can be a lot of definitions of attitude depending on the orientation of certain psychologists but despite those differences, they have a common agreement. They agreed that though attitudes are latent or invisible, they can be evaluated (Bem, 1970, Edwards, 1957, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitude can be measured through the reaction or responses of the person toward the object of the attitude which may be favorable or unfavorable toward the object, persons, institution, events, or situations. According to Allport, (1954), Hilgard, (1980), Rosenberg & Hovland, (1960), and Ajzen, (1993) that there are three categories of responses or reactions toward the object of the attitude, and they are cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. The cognitive component of an attitude refers to the thought, perceptions, or ideas of the person toward the object of the attitude. The affective component is about the emotional reaction or feeling of the person toward the object of the attitude such as like or dislike. While the behavioral or conative component of attitudes is related to behavioral reaction toward the object of the attitude. In this case, after one knows the subject, object, institution, event, and how he feels toward it and then what he/she is going to do or not to do. These may include plans, intentions, and commitments to a planned behavior.

The Role of Attitude Toward Behavior

Although behavior is a component of attitude, the two are distinct yet interconnected, as noted by Marcinkowski and Reid (2019). An attitude is a feeling, reaction, idea, perception, or evaluation of a particular subject, object, person, or institution. It represents a psychological inclination that is expressed through an assessment of a particular entity with a certain degree of favor or disfavor, according to Eagly and Chaiken (1998). In other words, it consists of a range of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a specific entity, person, thing, or occurrence, as described by Banaji and Heiphetz (2010). These emotions or beliefs can vary from highly negative to extremely positive towards the object of the attitude. It is possible to have both negative and positive thoughts or feelings towards the same object or subject, as Wood (2000) suggests. An attitude is an individual's mindset and a response or reaction to the object of the attitude, which influences their actions. Jung, as cited by Main (2014), argued that it is a "psychic readiness to act or respond in a specific way." Social psychologists believe that attitudes are not arbitrary but are formed through past and current experiences with the object of attitudes, as Allport (1935) pointed out. Since attitudes are formed through learning or experience, they are not static but rather dynamic in nature, implying that they can change. How a person perceives an object or attitude is influenced by exposure to that object. Repeated exposure is sufficient to strengthen an individual's attitude toward it, according to Zajonc (1998).

The idea that attitude influences behavior has been around since 1918 and 1925 when Thomas and Znaniecki and Watson, respectively, suggested that attitude is important for understanding human behavior. Their ideas spurred researchers to investigate the relationship between attitude and behavior. However, later studies (Wicker, 1969, Himelstein & Moore, 1963, De Fleur & Westie, 1958; Linn, 1965, Corey, 1937; Freeman & Ataoev, 1960) challenged the original findings of these early researchers. Studies conducted by Corey (1937), Freeman and Ataoey (1960), and others found little to no correlation between attitude and behavior. For example, a study on students' attitudes and cheating behavior found no correlation between the two. Similarly, studies (Wicker and Pomazal,1971; Dean, 1958) on the attitudes toward labor unions and participation in union meetings, as well as participation in a social psychology class, also found no correlation between attitude and behavior. These findings suggest that the relationship between attitude and behavior may not be as straightforward as originally thought.

The findings of studies that found little to no correlation between attitude and behavior somewhat discouraged later researchers from continuing to study the effect of attitude on behavior. These findings challenged the idea that personal disposition toward behavior was an important predictor of behavior. As a result, many social psychologists accepted the negative verdict on the relationship between attitude and behavior. Instead of studying personal disposition, they recommended studying social context and norms as determinants of human behavior. Researchers contended that human behavior is influenced by social context and norms (De Fleur & Westie, 1958, Deutscher, 1969). Wicker (1969) even challenged new researchers to abandon the study of the attitude-behavior relationship.

However, some social psychologists, such as Ajzen and Fishbein (1977, 2000), continued to defend the old theory that attitude is a key predictor of human behavior, which was also supported by Allport (1968). Allport considered attitude as "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology" and emphasized its importance in predicting behavior (p. 59). Ajzen (1993) explained that inconsistencies in earlier studies were not due

to attitude and behavior themselves, but rather a result of other factors such as response biases, the multidimensionality of attitudes, and moderating variables such as self-efficacy, self-awareness, and experience. Additionally, Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) criticized earlier inconsistencies, arguing that measuring attitude as a single construct rather than a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, affective, and conative or behavioral constructs does not fully capture the complexity of the attitude construct (Allport, 1935).

Attitude Toward Higher Education and Academic Performance

Attitude is a key predictor of behavior, as noted by Znaniecki (1918) and Watson (1925), and later confirmed by social psychologists like Ajzen and Fishbein (1977, 2000). Allport (1968) emphasized that attitude is a key determining factor in predicting human behavior. While some field research has challenged these ideas by disproving the relationship between attitude and behavior, studies such as Abun's (2017) research on the relationship between environmental attitude and behavior, and Fitzsimmons' (2005) research on entrepreneurial attitude and behavior support these ideas.

Understanding students' attitudes towards education is critical to understanding their behavior during academic exercises (Makiguchi, 1936; Oliver, 1953; Sen, 2013; Das et al., 2014; Agir, 2019). For some students, higher education is viewed to secure future employment and become successful (Immerwahr, 2004), while others see it as a way to improve their economic and social well-being and access employment opportunities (Mandal et al., 2018; Pillai & Joseph, n.d.). However, some students hold negative attitudes toward higher education due to factors such as cost and unpreparedness (Immerwahr, 2004; Roy & Kareem, 2016).

Despite these concerns, higher education is still viewed as an instrument for social and economic development (Benjamin, 1993). Studies have shown that college graduates have a longer lifespan, better health practices and diet, better access to healthcare, greater economic security and stability, more prestigious employment, greater community service and leadership, more self-confidence, and less criminal activity and incarceration compared to high school graduates (Allen, 2007). Schools are perceived as a venue for developing personal and social qualities, aptitudes to become good citizens, and gaining knowledge and skills (Pearson et al., 1997; Mandal et al., 2018). Understanding students' attitudes towards education is crucial to ensure that their behavior aligns with their academic goals and to support them in achieving their desired outcomes.

The importance of attitude as a key predictor of behavior has been emphasized since the early 20th century (Znaniecki, 1918; Watson, 1925; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, 2000; Allport, 1968). Despite some challenges to this idea, studies consistently show a correlation between attitude and behavior, including in environmental and entrepreneurial contexts. Understanding students' attitudes towards higher education is crucial in predicting their academic behavior. Some view higher education positively, while others have negative views due to cost and unpreparedness. Nevertheless, higher education is seen as a means for social and economic development, and college graduates generally have a higher quality of life. Schools are viewed as venues for personal and social development, as well as for gaining knowledge and skills to become good citizens (Pearson et al., 1997; Mandal et al., 2018).

Previous studies have measured the relationship between students' attitudes toward higher education and academic engagement, including studies by Malmstrom and Oqvist (2018) and Afzal and Rashid (2018). While these studies failed to identify the exact attitudes that drive students to pursue higher education, Pillai and Joseph (n.d) found that students see higher education as a training ground for employment and a means of improving their lives. This finding is supported by Maheswari and Haridas (2013), who found that students view higher education as a guarantor for realizing their career goals and dreams, driving their academic excellence. Additionally, Allen (2007) found that college graduates have a better quality of life compared to high school graduates, motivating people to pursue higher education and academic excellence.

The importance of higher education as a tool for employment has been acknowledged by many students. However, some students have a negative attitude toward higher education due to poor facilities, lack of trained teachers or instructors, and a negative school environment. Curran and Rosen (2006) found that negative attitudes toward higher education were due to various factors, such as the physical environment of the school, the physical environment in which the course is conducted, the course topic, the course execution, and the instructors' personality.

Research has also been conducted on the effect of school environment and attitude on academic performance. For example, Dangara and Geraldin (2019), Maxwell et al. (2017), and Saputra et al. (2020) have explored this relationship. It is important to address negative attitudes toward higher education and improve the school environment to ensure that students can reach their full potential.
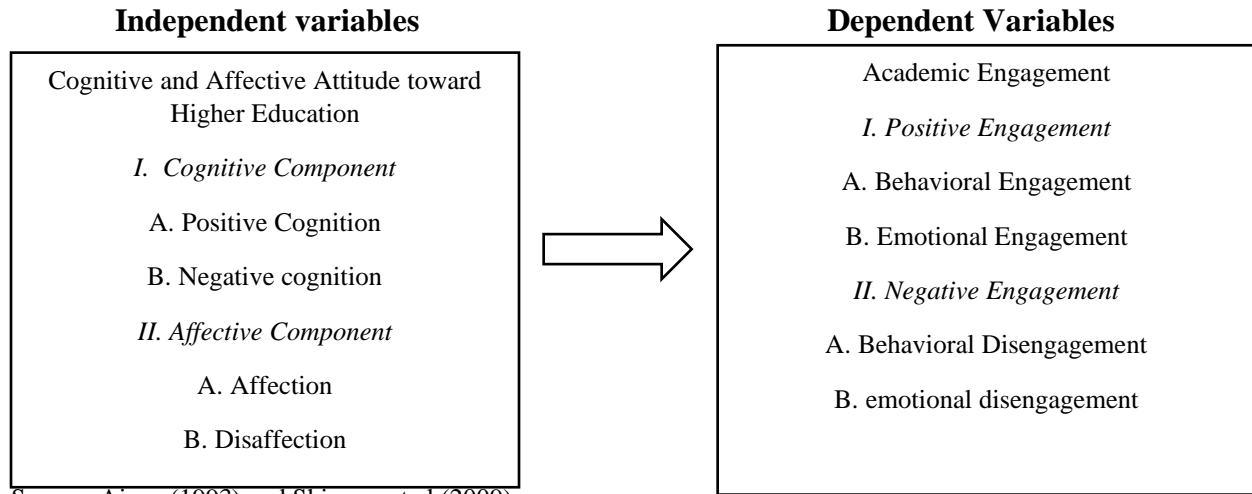
The Concept of Academic Engagement

Academic engagement is a multi-dimensional concept that emphasizes participation and identification with school, teachers, and subject matter (Audas & Willms, 2002; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). It involves both behavioral and emotional engagement, with psychological effort and investment toward learning (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Wehlage et al., 1989). The quality of engagement, rather than the quantity, is crucial, with energized, enthusiastic, focused, and emotionally positive engagement being desirable (Audas & Willms, 2002).

Further, academic engagement has three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and conative or emotional engagement. These dimensions have been defined by various social psychologists, including Fredricks et al. (2004), Fin et al. (1995), and Skinner (1993). The behavioral dimension includes positive conduct, participation in learning and academic-related tasks, and involvement in related school activities. The cognitive dimension involves students' investment in learning and willingness to extend efforts to understand and master difficult tasks. The emotional dimension includes motivational, psychological, and affective engagement, which refers to students' emotional reactions toward their teachers, classmates, academic work, and the school as a whole (Fredricks et al., 2004).

On one hand, academic engagement encompasses engaged behavior and emotion, including effort, persistence, attention, concentration, enthusiasm, interest, and enjoyment. On the other hand, academic disengagement involves disaffected behavior and emotion, including passivity, withdrawal, frustration, and disruption (Meyer & Turner, 2002, Pekrun et al., 2002, Schutz & DeCuir, 2002, Weiner, 1985, Murdock, 1999, Finn et al., 1995).

Conceptual Framework

Independent variables	**Dependent Variables**
Cognitive and Affective Attitude toward Higher Education *I. Cognitive Component* A. Positive Cognition B. Negative cognition *II. Affective Component* A. Affection B. Disaffection	Academic Engagement *I. Positive Engagement* A. Behavioral Engagement B. Emotional Engagement *II. Negative Engagement* A. Behavioral Disengagement B. emotional disengagement

Source: Ajzen (1993) and Skinner, et.al (2009)

Figure 1: The conceptual framework reflects the independent and dependent variables which explain that attitude toward higher education affects the academic engagement of students.

Statement of the Problems

The study determined the relationship between the attitude of students toward higher education and their academic engagement. It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What is the cognitive attitude of students toward higher education in terms of

> *1.1 positive cognition; and*
>
> *1.2 negative cognition.*

2. What is the affective attitude of students toward higher education in terms:

> *2.1 affection (positive); and*
>
> *2.2 disaffection (negative).*

3. What is the academic engagement of students in terms of

> *3.1 behavioral engagement; and*
>
> *3.2 emotional engagement.*

4. What is the academic disengagement of students in terms of behavioral and emotional disengagement?

5. Is there a relationship between cognitive and affective attitudes toward higher education and the academic engagement of students?

Assumptions

The study assumes that students' attitude toward higher education affects their academic engagement, and it can be measured. The study also assumes that the questionnaires are valid, and the answers of students are objective.

Hypothesis

According to Ajzen's theory (1985, 1987) and Ajzen & Madden's (1986) work, attitudes can impact human behavior. Therefore, the present study proposes that students' attitudes toward higher education influence their academic engagement.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on assessing the cognitive and affective attitudes towards higher education and academic engagement among Divine Word Colleges' students in the Ilocos Region. The study does not cover other attitudes or engagement dimensions.

Methodology

The study was carried out through appropriate research methodologies such as research design, data gathering instruments, population, the locale of the study, data gathering procedures, and statistical treatment of data.

Research Design

The current study is quantitative research that utilized a descriptive assessment and correlational research design. Descriptive research aims to provide a detailed and accurate account of the data collected through questionnaires and statistical treatment. It is also used to describe profiles, frequency distribution, and characteristics of people, situations, phenomena, or related variables, providing a snapshot of "what is" about the data (Ariola, 2006, cited by Abun, 2019).

The study employed a descriptive correlational method to determine the level of students' attitudes toward higher education and its correlation with academic engagement. This approach aimed to identify the dominant attitude of students towards higher education and its impact on their academic engagement. By examining the specific attitudes that influence academic engagement, the study can provide insights into how higher education institutions can foster positive attitudes that lead to greater academic engagement among students.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region, specifically the Divine Word College of Vigan located in the heritage city of Vigan, and the Divine Word College of Laoag located in Laoag City, both in the provinces of Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, respectively. These colleges are administered by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), also known as the Congregation of the Divine Word Missionaries, a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to missionary work and education.

Population

The study focused on second-year college students enrolled in Divine Word Colleges located in the Ilocos region. Given the limited number of students, the study employed total enumeration as the sampling design.

Data Gathering Instruments

To gather data, the study employed validated questionnaires adapted from Immerwahr's (2003) Public Attitude on Higher Education and Skinner et al.'s (2009) Motivational Perspective on Engagement and Disaffection questionnaires.

Data Gathering Procedures:

The researcher secured permission from the Colleges' Presidents to administer the questionnaires to the students. The researcher personally met with the Presidents and students to request their participation. The retrieval of the questionnaires was arranged between the Presidents' representatives and the researcher, with the assistance of college employees and faculty.

Ethical Consideration

The research was submitted to the review board, but the review was waived as it did not involve vulnerable or human subjects.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Since the study employed a descriptive research design, descriptive statistics such as weighted mean were used to determine the level of attitude toward higher education and academic engagement. Pearson r was used to measure the correlation between attitudes toward higher education and academic engagement.

The population of the study was composed of all second-year College Students of Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos region. Since the total numbers of students are limited, and therefore total enumeration is the sampling design of the study.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation were used:

Statistical Range	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21-5.00	*Strongly Agree/Very High*
3.41-4.20	*Agree/High*
2.61-3.40	*Somewhat Agree/Moderate*
1.81-2.60	*Disagree/Low*
1.00-1.80	*Strongly Disagree/Very Low*

Data Presentation and Analysis

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between students' attitudes toward higher education and their academic engagement. To achieve this, the study sought to answer the following specific questions:

Problem 1. What is the cognitive attitude of students toward higher education in terms of

1.1 positive cognition; and

1.2 negative cognition.

Table 1. Student's Attitude Toward Higher Education as to Cognitive Component

		Mean	DI
a. Positive Cognition			
1	Higher education is useful for my future employment.	4.30	A/H
2	Higher education is necessary for improving the quality of life	4.19	A/H
3	Higher education is indispensable in updating my knowledge and skills	4.02	A/H
4	Higher education should be for all	4.24	A/H
5	Higher education is the only way to get a better job.	3.86	A/H
6	Higher education is necessary for a person to be successful in today's work world	3.89	A/H
	Composite Mean	4.08	A/H
b. Negative Cognition			
1	Higher education is not important	2.09	D/Low
2	There are many ways to succeed without a college education.	2.61	SWA/M
3	Higher education is irrelevant because people can get a job after Senior High School.	2.61	SWA/M
4	Higher education is not the only way to make our life better.	2.81	SWA/M
5	Higher education is not necessary	2.53	D/Low.
	Composite Mean	2.53	D/Low

Source: Immerwahr (2003)

Legend:

Statistical Range	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree/Very High
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree/Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree/Very Low

The composite mean of students' attitudes toward higher education shows a high level of agreement (4.08) with its positive component, indicating that students consider higher education as important. Students agree that higher education is useful for employment, improves the quality of life, updates knowledge and skills, leads to a better job, and is essential for success in today's work world. On the other hand, the negative component has a lower composite mean of 2.53, indicating disagreement. While students did not agree that higher education is not important or necessary, they somewhat agree that there are alternative ways to succeed without a college education, and higher education is not the only way to improve life.

Problem 2. What is the affective attitude of students toward higher education in terms of:

2.1 positive affection; and

2.2 disaffection.

Table 2. Student's Attitude toward Higher Education as to Affective Attitude

		Mean	DI
Positive Affection			
1	Higher education is interesting.	4.11	A/H
2	Higher education is enjoyable.	4.09	A/H
3	Higher education excites me.	3.80	A/H
4	Higher education makes me great.	3.90	A/H
Composite Mean		**3.98**	**A/H**
Disaffection			
1	Higher education makes me nervous.	2.94	SWA/M
2	Just thinking of higher education is stressful.	3.00	SWA/M
3	Thinking of higher education makes me upset	2.71	SWA/M
4	Higher education is not exciting because so many things to do.	2.63	SWA/M
5	Higher education worries me.	2.80	SWA/M
6	Higher education worries my parent.	2.80	SWA/M
Composite Mean		**2.81**	**SWA/M**

Source: Immerwahr (2003)

Overall, students' attitude toward higher education in terms of their affection is high, as reflected by the composite mean of 3.98. All indicators are rated within the same level of mean rating with the interpretation of "agree" or "high." However, in terms of their disaffection, the attitude of students toward higher education is somewhat agreed or moderate, as reflected by the composite mean of 2.81, which is lower than its positive cognition. Students somewhat agree that higher education makes them nervous, stressed, upset, worried, and worries their parents, and it does not excite them because there are many things to do.

Problem 3. What is the academic engagement of students in terms of
      3.1 behavioral engagement; and
      3.2 emotional engagement.
Table 3. Students' Academic Engagement as to Behavioral and Emotional Engagement

Positive Engagement		Mean	DI.
a. Behavioral Engagement			
1	I try hard to do well in the school	4.06	A/H

2	In class, I work hard as I can	4.03	A/H
3	When I am in class, I participate in class discussion	3.84	A/H
4	I pay attention in class	4.00	A/H
5	When I am in class, I listen carefully	3.96	A/H
Composite Mean		**3.98**	**A/H**
b. Emotional Engagement			
1	When I am in class, I feel good	3.74	A/H
2	When we work on something in class, I feel interested.	3.71	A/H
3	Class is fun	3.81	A/L
4	I enjoy learning new things in class	3.92	A/H
5	When we work on something in class, I get involved.	3.69	A/H
Composite Mean		**3.77**	**A/H**

Source: Skinner, et.al (2009)

In general, students' academic engagement, particularly in terms of behavioral engagement, is rated as "agree or high" with a mean of 3.98. Individually, all items are rated within the same level of mean rating, indicating that students agree they try hard, work hard, participate in class, and listen carefully. In terms of emotional engagement, students also show a high level of agreement with a mean of 3.77, indicating that they feel good, interested, enjoy learning, get involved, and find class fun, even though they did not strongly agree

Problem 4. What is academic disengagement of students in terms of behavioral and emotional disengagement?
Table 4. Student's Academic Disengagement as to Behavioral and Emotional   Disengagement.

Negative Engagement		Mean	DI.
a. Behavioral Disengagement			
1	When I am in class, I just act like I am working.	3.21	SWA/M
2	I don't try very hard at school.	2.91	SWA/M
3	In class, I do just enough to get by.	3.08	SWA/M
4	When I am in class, I think about other things.	3.06	SWA/M
5	When I am in class, my mind wanders.	3.11	SWA/M
Composite Mean		3.07	SWA/M
b. Emotional Disengagement			
1	When we work on something in class, I feel bored.	2.60	D/L

2	When my teacher explains new materials, I feel bored.	2.55	D/L
3	When we start something new in class, I feel nervous.	2.87	SWA/M
4	When we work on something in class, I feel discouraged.	2.47	D/L
5	When I am working on my classwork, I feel mad.	2.52	D/L
Composite Mean		2.60	D/L

Source: Skinner, et.al (2009)

In terms of students' academic disengagement, their behavioral disengagement has a composite mean of 3.07, indicating a moderate level of agreement that they don't try very hard in school and just do enough to get by. On the other hand, their emotional disengagement has a composite mean of 2.60, indicating disagreement that they feel bored or discouraged during class, but they somewhat agree that they enjoy starting new things in class.

5. Is there a relationship between cognitive and affective attitudes toward higher education and the academic engagement of students?

Table 5: The Relationship between cognitive and affective attitude and academic engagement.

		Positive Engagement - Behavioral	Positive Engagement - Emotional	Negative Engagement- Behavioral	Negative Engagement- Emotional
Cognitive-Positive	Pearson Correlation	.364**	.234**	.034	-.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.634	.195
	N	201	201	201	201
Cognitive-Negative	Pearson Correlation	-.123	-.095	.072	.202**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.083	.179	.307	.004
	N	201	201	201	201
Affection	Pearson Correlation	.295**	.271**	.036	-.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.610	.179
	N	201	201	201	201
Disaffection	Pearson Correlation	-.054	-.107	.146*	.312**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.448	.131	.039	.000
	N	201	201	201	201

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson r correlation indicates a significant correlation between students' cognitive attitude toward higher education and their academic engagement, with positive cognition correlating to both behavioral and emotional

engagement and negative cognition correlating to emotional disengagement. Affective attitude toward higher education also correlates significantly with behavioral and emotional engagement, with positive affection correlating strongly and disaffection correlating moderately to both forms of disengagement. These findings suggest that improving students' academic engagement can enhance their positive cognition and affection toward higher education. Affective attitude toward higher education is significantly correlated with behavioral and emotional academic engagement.

Results And Discussion

The study found a significant correlation between students' attitudes toward higher education and academic engagement. Changing students' attitudes is suggested as a key predictor of academic engagement, and social psychologist scholars provide ideas on how attitudes can be changed (Grush, 1976, Cherry, 2023, Delplanque, et.al., 2015, Johnson, 2023, Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, Bagozzi, 1986; Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, Stone & Taylor, 2021, Seel, 2012). Persuasion through communication is one approach, as outlined in Stroebe's (2012) book on Strategies of Attitude and Behavior Change, which cites McGuire's (1981, 1985) information-processing model of persuasion. The challenge for teachers is to communicate the positive value of higher education to reverse any negative attitudes students may hold.

Conclusion

The study found that students' positive cognitive attitude toward higher education was high (4.08), while their negative cognitive attitude was low (2.53). Their effective attitude showed a positive component of 3.98 and a negative component of 2.81. Students reported high levels of behavioral (3.98) and emotional (3.77) engagement in their academic activities, but somewhat agreed they were behaviorally disengaged. There was a significant correlation between attitudes toward higher education and academic engagement, supporting the hypothesis that students' attitudes affect their engagement.

Authors' Contribution

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.A. G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R., Methodology, D.A., G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R. Data Collection: D.A., G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R. Formal analysis: D.A., G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R. Writing—original draft preparation: D.A., G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R Writing—review, and editing D.A., G.J.A., C. D.A., L.A.R.

All authors have read and agreed to the published final version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, and the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Ethical Review: the ethical review was waived by the ethical review committee because it does not involve vulnerable groups and does not involve human subjects.

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